

MAY 21, 2025

Dear Chair Abney and House Finance Members,

I am George Johnson, a resident of Coventry, and Rep. Earl Reed is my Representative.

I am retired from a 32+ year of RI State Service with the Statewide Planning Program, during which I had occasion to interact on a protracted basis with issues relating to maintaining and improving the statewide transit services provided by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, RIPTA. In my experience, RIPTA has perennially been asked to do a near impossible job and given insufficient resources to accomplish it. Even while being under-resourced, RIPTA, nonetheless, has continually attempted to improve its service and innovate, with route integration and service improvements such as the R Line, electronic fares, and transit centers.

With the adoption of a new, ambitious Statewide Transit Master Plan by the State Planning Council several years ago, Rhode Island is finally prepared to advance and develop the modern, statewide transit system Rhode Island needs to serve residents, reduce carbon emissions, and attract new employers and young people to our state. At the same time, the exhaustion of Covid-related federal operational support challenges RIPTA and the State fiscally and threatens to undo past progress and advancements.

The bills before your Committee (H6020, H5405, H5470, H5467, and H5468) provide a comprehensive support system to help ensure the future financial stability of RIPTA and allow it to begin implementing the many recommendations of the State Transit Master Plan. I encourage the Committee's favorable reporting of these bills to secure RIPTA's fiscal future and give the state's residents the transit system they need and deserve for the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views.

Respectfully,

George Johnson, Coventry